

want of appreciation of it is entirely due to the erroneous opinion that the city of Washington should have been taken; but this may be passed over as one of the absurdities of public criticism on the conduct of the war.

By glancing at the operations of Early from the 13th of June to the last of July, it will be seen that in less than two months he had marched more than four hundred miles, and with a force not exceeding 12,000 men had not only defeated, but entirely dispersed, two Federal armies of an aggregate strength of more than double his own; had invaded Maryland, and by his bold and rapid movement upon Washington had created an important diversion in favor of General Lee in the defence of Richmond; and had re-entered Virginia with a loss of less than 3000 men. After remaining a short time in the neighborhood of Leesburg, he returned to the Valley by way of Snicker's Gap, and about the 17th of July occupied the neighborhood of Berryville.

Early had no sooner established himself at Berryville than a considerable force of the enemy appeared on the Shenandoah near Castleman's Ferry, and partially effected a crossing, but were promptly driven back with heavy loss, after which they retired to the neighborhood of Harper's Ferry.

About the same time a large force under General Averell was reported to be advancing from Martinsburg to Winchester. Being unwilling to receive an attack in an unfavorable position, Early sent Ramseur with a division and two batteries of artillery to Winchester to retard Averell, while he withdrew with the main body of the army and supply-trains by way of White Post and Newtown to Strasburg.

Ramseur, having encountered the enemy a few miles east of Winchester, was defeated with a loss of four pieces of artillery, and forced to retire to Newtown, where he rejoined Early.

Averell, being arrested in his pursuit of Ramseur near Newtown, fell back to Kernstown, where he was soon joined by General Crook with the forces from Harper's Ferry.

From Newtown, Early continued his march to Strasburg without interruption. On the 23d he was informed of the junction of Crook and Averell and of their occupation of Kerns-

town; thereupon it was determined to attack them without delay. The security of the trains having been properly provided for, the army was put in motion early on the morning of the 24th toward the enemy.

About noon a position was gained from which it was observed that the enemy was in possession of the identical ground which had been occupied by Shields when encountered by Stonewall Jackson in March, 1862. The memory of that battle evidently did much to inspire the troops to deeds of valor in the approaching conflict.

Early quickly made his dispositions for battle. The divisions of Breckenridge and Rodes were thrown to the right of the turnpike, and those of Ramseur and Gordon were deployed to its left, the artillery being disposed of so as to cover the advance of the infantry, while the cavalry received instructions to close behind the enemy as soon as defeated.

Perceiving that the left flank of the enemy was exposed, Breckenridge under cover of a wooded hill gained a position from which he bore down upon it, and in gallant style doubled it upon the centre. This success was so vigorously followed up by the other troops that the Federals gave way at all points, and were soon in rapid retreat, which was accelerated by a vigorous pursuit. In this battle the losses on the part of the Confederates were insignificant, while those of the Federals in killed, wounded, and prisoners were considerable. While on the retreat a large number of their wagons and a considerable quantity of their stores were destroyed to prevent capture.

Finding that the enemy had again sought safety behind his defences, Early determined to re-enter Maryland, for the double purpose of covering a retaliatory expedition into Pennsylvania and to keep alive the diversion which had already been made in favor of the defence of Richmond. Therefore, about the 6th of August he crossed the Potomac in two columns—the one at Williamsport, and the other at Shepherdstown—and took a position between Sharpsburg and Hagerstown.

This occupation of Maryland was destined to be of short duration, for since Early's audacity had caused his strength to be so greatly magnified and the importance of his opera-

tions so exaggerated, Grant had considered it necessary to largely increase the Army of the Shenandoah, and to supersede Hunter by Phil Sheridan, one of the most energetic of his lieutenants. Being aware of the great increase of force prepared to be brought against him, Early recrossed the Potomac and returned up the Valley, being slowly followed by Sheridan, who had now taken command of the Middle Department.

On reaching Fisher's Hill, a position three miles west of Strasburg, Early halted and offered battle, which Sheridan made a show of accepting until the morning of the 17th, when he was discovered to be retreating toward Winchester. He was immediately pursued by Early, and, being overtaken near Kernstown, a spirited skirmish ensued while he continued to retire. Night coming on, the combatants separated, Early bivouacking in the neighborhood of Winchester, while Sheridan crossed the Opequan.

About this time Lieutenant-general R. H. Anderson joined Early with a division of infantry and a division of cavalry, thus increasing his force to about 12,000 men, while that of Sheridan exceeded 40,000. Notwithstanding the great disparity of numbers, the campaign was characterized by a series of skilful movements and brilliant skirmishes, which resulted on the 19th of September in the battle of Winchester, which had doubtless been hastened to a conclusion by the departure of Anderson from the Valley on the 15th with Kershaw's division for Richmond. Anderson had no sooner turned his back on the mountains than Sheridan threw his whole force against Early at Winchester and defeated him, not so much by force of numbers as by one of those chances of war which sometimes beset the ablest commander; for, after having gallantly contested the field and firmly maintained their position until near the close of the day, a portion of his troops was seized with a panic, which rapidly spread until the greater part of the infantry and cavalry fell into confusion, and troops who had never before turned their backs upon the enemy retired in disorder from the field. The artillery alone remained firm, and covered with distinguished gallantry the retreat of the other troops

until a place of safety was gained and order restored, and then retired fighting, step by step, until it extricated itself from overwhelming numbers, leaving heaps of dead to testify to its matchless conduct and power. Sheridan's forces were so shattered that he could not immediately avail himself of the success he had gained, and Early was permitted an uninterrupted retreat to Fisher's Hill.

Notwithstanding his force had been considerably weakened by its late disaster, Early determined to maintain his position on Fisher's Hill. He could not realize that every man was not as stout-hearted as himself, nor that the troops he had so often led to victory were not invincible; and besides his reluctance to abandon the rich and beautiful Valley, there were other and stronger reasons for his decision. It was evident that, if left unopposed in the Valley, Sheridan would immediately concert a plan of co-operation with Grant, either by advancing directly upon Richmond or by operating on its lines of communication with a powerful cavalry force until a junction was formed with him below Petersburg; in which case the important diversion in favor of Lee would have come to naught. Therefore the object of detaining Sheridan with his formidable force in the Valley sufficiently warranted Early, on the soundest military principles, in his determination to oppose him at all hazards.

The defiant attitude assumed by him was the most effective he could have adopted for accomplishing his object, and it created a deception as to his strength that made his opponent cautious, but which was quickly dissipated by a collision. His force at this time was less than 7000 men, while that of Sheridan was greater by at least four to one.

Sheridan's forces, having sufficiently recovered from the effect of the battle, pursued Early, and on the 22d attacked him in his position on Fisher's Hill. The thin Confederate ranks could offer but feeble resistance to the overwhelming force brought against them, and the conflict was consequently of short duration, and, owing to the extent and difficulty of the position, the Confederates sustained considerable loss before they could extricate themselves.

Early then retired up the Valley to a position above Harrisonburg, while Sheridan pursued as far as Newmarket. Both armies then remained inactive for some days, in order to rest and reorganize their forces.

About the 1st of October, Sheridan retraced his steps down the Valley to the neighborhood of Middletown, where he encamped on an elevated plateau behind Cedar Creek. Early, perceiving that his adversary had retired, pursued him to the neighborhood of Strasburg, where he took up a position from which he might be able to attack with advantage. Sheridan had unwittingly occupied a location that gave his adversary admirable advantages and opportunity to execute a surprise.

Early entrusted a considerable force to General Gordon for that purpose. Having made himself familiar with the work in hand, Gordon, on the night of October 18th, proceeded to its execution. Crossing Cedar Creek sufficiently below the Federal pickets to avoid observation, he cautiously proceeded in the direction of the Federal encampments without accident or discovery. A favorable point for the accomplishment of his plans was gained just before daybreak on the 19th. The camp was reached, and in the midst of quiet sleep and peaceful dreams the war-cry and the ringing peals of musketry arose to wake the slumbering warriors and call them to arms. The drums and bugles loudly summoned the soldier to his colors, but there was no ear for those familiar sounds. The crack of the rifle and the shouts of battle were upon the breeze, and no other sounds were heeded by the flying multitude.

Gordon's surprise had been complete, and when the dawn appeared long lines of fugitives were seen rushing madly toward Winchester. Such a rout had not been seen since the famous battle of Bull Run.

The Federals left artillery, baggage, small-arms, camp equipage, clothing, knapsacks, haversacks, canteens—in fact, everything—in their panic. The whole camp was filled with valuable booty, which in the end proved a dangerous temptation to the Confederates, many of whom, instead of following up their brilliant success, left their ranks for plunder.

If an apology for such conduct were ever admissible, it was

so on this occasion, the troops having been so long unaccustomed to the commonest comfort while making long and fatiguing marches and battling against large odds, and being now broken down, ragged, and hungry, they would have been superhuman had they resisted the tempting stores that lay scattered on every hand.

The Federals finding that they were not pursued, when they reached the neighborhood of Newtown their spirits began to revive, the habit of discipline and order assumed its sway, and the shapeless mass of the morning regained the appearance of an army.

Sheridan, having been absent, met his fugitive army a little below Newtown. Order having been restored, he re-formed his troops, and, facing them about, returned to the scene of their late disaster. The Confederates, being unprepared for an attack, were quickly defeated and forced to retire to Fisher's Hill, and from there to Newmarket, where Early maintained a bold front for several weeks. By this return of fortune Sheridan not only recovered all that had been lost in the morning, but acquired considerable captures from the Confederates.

The Confederates then retired to the neighborhood of Staunton, and further operations were suspended on account of the inclemency of the season.

Sheridan then occupied the lower Valley, where he employed himself in completing the work of destruction begun by Hunter. His work of devastation was so complete that he exultingly reported to his superior that a "crow in traversing the Valley would be obliged to carry his rations." Before the spring was open Sheridan was in motion with a cavalry, or rather mounted infantry, force 9000 strong, his objective point being Staunton. The force of Early, having been greatly reduced, was entirely inadequate for an effective resistance. Staunton was therefore evacuated, and Early retired to Waynesboro'. His entire force now consisted of Wharton's division of infantry, six pieces of artillery, and a small body of cavalry, making in all about 1800 men. With this force he took a position to protect an important railroad bridge

over the south branch of the Shenandoah, and at the same time to cover Rockfish Gap, a pass connecting the Valley with Eastern Virginia. This pass was doubly important, as it gave a passage both to the Charlottesville turnpike and the Central Railroad.

As Sheridan was without artillery and the ground was unfit for the operations of cavalry, Early could have easily maintained his position with reliable troops; but there was considerable disaffection in Wharton's division. Therefore, without his knowledge his little army harbored the elements of defeat, for at the first show of an attack the malcontents threw down their arms, and, almost without opposition, Sheridan carried the position, compelling Early with his faithful few to seek safety in retreat. A number of these, however, were captured before they could make their escape.

Sheridan, having now removed all opposition, passed through Rockfish Gap into Eastern Virginia, traversed the interior of the State, and formed a junction with Grant almost without interruption.

On reaching Gordonsville, Early collected a handful of men and threw himself upon the flank and rear of Sheridan, but his force was too small to make any impression. He was only induced to make this effort by his extreme reluctance to witness an unopposed march of an enemy through his country.

It has been said that Early, at the head of his faithful band, hovering like an eagle about the columns of Sheridan, displayed more heroic valor than when at the head of his victorious army in Maryland.

In operations of the character above described long lists of casualties may naturally be expected, in which the names of the bravest, noblest, and truest are sure to be found. While it is impossible for me to make separate mention of these, memory dictates the names of Rodes and Ramseur. From Richmond to the memorable campaign of the Wilderness they bore a conspicuous part, and their names rose high on the roll of fame. Rodes fell in the battle of Winchester at the head of his splendid division, and Ramseur was mortally wounded at Cedar Creek in his heroic attempt to retrieve the fortune of the

day. Their fall was a noble sacrifice to the cause for which they fought, and their memory will ever remain green in the hearts of their countrymen.

The Valley campaign above described was attended with a series of barbarities happily without parallel in the history of the war. General Hunter had gone in his depredations far beyond any warrant in the exigencies of war. The destruction of agricultural products, and even of mills and factories, might have been defended as a warrantable military measure, but the burning of private habitations was an instance of pure vandalism utterly devoid of excuse, and sure to instigate retaliatory measures of the same barbarous character. This retaliation came in the cavalry raid sent by Early into Pennsylvania, in which the town of Chambersburg was given to the flames. It is but just to state here, however, that these cruel proceedings were in neither case dictated by the commanding general. Hunter's operations were unauthorized by General Grant, and the responsibility for them rests solely upon himself. The same may be said of Early's reprisal. It was not authorized by General Lee, and was instigated by the desire to prove that such outrages could not be committed with impunity.

The subsequent devastation of the Valley by General Sheridan was still more complete than that effected by Hunter, though the destruction of residences and institutions by the latter was not repeated. Sheridan says: "The whole country from the Blue Ridge to the North Mountain has been made entirely untenable for a rebel army. I have destroyed over two thousand barns filled with wheat and hay and farming-implements; over seventy mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over four thousand head of stock; and have killed and issued to the troops not less than three thousand sheep. This destruction embraces the Luray Valley and the Little Fort Valley, as well as the main Valley." Such a recital, given in a tone almost of boasting, seems more like the story of some ruthless warrior of the olden times than of a modern soldier. Admitting that the destruction of provisions may be defended as an important aid to the defeat of an enemy, no such excuse can be offered for the burning of

mills and farming-implements. The destruction of the property of private citizens, who are in no sense responsible for, and are taking no part in, a war has always in it the elements of barbarism, and the suffering thereby caused to the defenceless has seldom or never been warranted by the military advantage gained.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG.*

Reasons for Defending Richmond.—Beginning of the Siege.—Smith's Assault upon Petersburg.—The First Line Carried.—Attack on the Second Line.—Federal Successes.—The Confederates Retire to a New Line.—Assault of the 18th.—Federal Repulse.—Both Sides Intrench.—Defeat of Birney.—Wilson's Cavalry Raid.—He is Defeated and Driven Back.—Mining the Confederate Works.—Preparing for the Explosion.—Movements of Hancock and Sheridan.—The Charging Columns Ready.—Firing the Mine.—Effect of the Explosion.—Delay in the Assault.—The Charge Checked by the Confederate Artillery.—Infantry Hurried up.—Frightful Slaughter of the Federals.—The Assault a Failure.—Observations upon the Mining Enterprise.—Results.—Colonel Carter's Reminiscences.—General Lee and the Sparrow.—A Telling Rebuke.—General Hampton's Story.—A Letter to Lee's Daughter.

THE war in Virginia had now been reduced to the attack and defence of Richmond—in other words, to a siege whose termination was only a question of time.

Why the military operations in Virginia should have been contracted to this narrow limit, and the independence of a people struggling for nationality brought to depend upon the defence of a city, may be naturally asked, yet this question cannot be fully answered without casting a reflection upon the judgment of the distinguished patriots who presided over the destiny of the Confederacy. It may, however, be said that, having made Richmond the capital when it was of considerable military importance as the base of a defensive system embracing Yorktown, Norfolk, and the mouth of the James River, it could not, when circumstances changed, be easily abandoned without creating an impression both at home and abroad of national weakness; and, having seen it successfully defended against large odds, it was hoped that the same head and hand would be able to defend it in future peril. Therefore it was decided to employ all the resources of the country in its defence.

This decision was not adopted without hope of success; for the brilliant campaigns of Lee, and especially his late gigantic contest with Grant, had inspired such confidence that no military achievement was considered impossible to him and his army. In this connection it must be borne in mind that on an extensive theatre of operations, with free scope for the exercise of his powers, an able general may reasonably hope to satisfy public expectation, but when confined to the defensive in a siege, all that can be expected is to delay the final result. If it should be asked, What was General Lee's opinion in regard to the defence of Richmond? it might be said that he was too thorough a soldier openly to question the wisdom of the Government in forming its plan of operations or to employ less than his utmost ability in his efforts to execute them. The general who places himself in opposition to his government, no matter how weak that government may be, is sure to incur public condemnation and disgrace. A striking example in corroboration of this assertion presents itself in the case of Marshal Bazaine at the close of the late Franco-Prussian War.

Having now to sustain a siege, General Lee applied himself to it with all his energy. His whole soul was given to the gigantic struggle before him, and no labor or hardship deterred him.

The battle of Cold Harbor had taught Grant the inutility and peril of direct assaults upon the Confederate intrenchments. He therefore determined upon siege operations, and about the middle of June he threw a large portion of his army south of the James and extended his line of investment so as to embrace the city of Petersburg. This caused Lee to make a counter-movement in order to cover that place and protect the railroads leading to it. The capture of Petersburg was of primary importance to the Federals, as it would enable them to cut off two lines of communication very necessary for the support of Richmond, and at the same time to greatly contract their line of circumvallation. Therefore its possession was much desired.

As descriptive of the preliminary operations about Peters-

burg we introduce an extract from the able address of Captain McCabe before the Southern Historical Society :

" Warren with the Fifth corps and Wilson's division of cavalry, seizing the crossing at Long Bridge, made his dispositions to screen the movement.\* Hancock's corps, marching past the Fifth, was directed upon Wilcox's landing (on the James); Wright's and Burnside's corps upon Douthard's; while Smith, with four divisions of the Tenth and Eighteenth corps, moved rapidly to White House and embarked for Bermuda Hundred. . . . .

" Smith's command reached Bermuda Hundred, where Grant was in person, on the evening of the 14th, and, being reinforced by Kautz's division of cavalry and Hinks's division of negro infantry, was at once directed to cross the Appomattox at Point of Rocks, where pontoons had been laid, and move rapidly on Petersburg. The passage of the river was effected during the same night, and early on the 15th Smith advanced in three columns, Kautz with his horsemen covering his left. Now, Hancock's entire corps had been ferried to the south side on the night of Smith's arrival at Bermuda Hundred, and might easily have been pushed forward to take part in the assault, but, left in ignorance of the projected *coup de main*, its commander, in obedience to orders, was awaiting rations where he had crossed. Incredible as it may seem, General Meade, the immediate commander of the Army of the Potomac, was left in like ignorance, and General Grant, hurrying back to the north side to push forward reinforcements from the corps of Wright and Burnside, found that the army pontoon-train had been sent to piece out the wagon-train pontoons, which had proved insufficient for the passage of the Chickahominy at Coles's Ferry. Thus nearly a day was gained to the handful of brave men defending the lines of Petersburg, and lost to the Army of the Potomac—a curious instance of the uncertain contingencies of war, reminding the military student, with a difference, of the happy chance which saved Zaragoza in the first siege when Lefèvre Desnouettes, 'missing the road to the bridge, missed that to victory.'

\* The crossing of the Chickahominy.

"Smith, pushing forward his columns toward Petersburg early on the morning of the 15th, had scarcely advanced a distance of two miles when he encountered a hasty line of rifle-trenches, held by Graham's light battery and a meagre force of dismounted cavalry, the whole under Dearing, a young brigadier of high and daring spirit and of much experience in war. This position, resolutely held for two hours, was finally carried by the infantry, yet Dearing, retiring slowly with unabashed front, hotly disputing every foot of the advance, so delayed the hostile columns that it was 11 o'clock A. M. before they came upon the heavy line of intrenchments covering the eastern approaches to the town.

"Shortly after that hour Smith moved by the Baxter road upon the works in front of Batteries 6 and 7, but the men of Wise's brigade resisted his repeated assaults with 'unparalleled stubbornness'—I use the exact language of Beauregard—while the rapid fire of the light batteries completed for the time his discomfiture.

"Smith had been told that the works defending Petersburg were such that 'cavalry could ride over them'—'a representation,' says Mr. Swinton archly, 'not justified by his experience;' and he now proceeded to reconnoitre more carefully what was in his front.

"The old defences of Petersburg consisted of a heavy line of redans connected by powerful rifle-trenches, and were of such extent as to require a garrison of 25,000 men. In the opinion of General Beauregard, this line was in many places faultily located, and especially vulnerable in the quarter of Batteries 5, 6, and 7. Reckoning his heavy gunners and the local militia, Beauregard had for the defence of this extended line on the morning of the 15th but 2200 men of all arms, while Smith confronted him with above 20,000. At 7.30 P. M. the enemy, warned by their heavy losses of the morning against assaulting in column in face of artillery served with such rapidity and precision, advanced at a charging pace in line, and after a spirited contest carried with a rush the whole line of redans from 5 to 9 inclusive.

"Scarcely had the assault ended when Hancock came up

with the Second corps, and, though the ranking officer, with rare generosity—which recalls the chivalric conduct of Sir James Outram to Havelock in front of Lucknow—at once offered his troops to Smith and stood ready to receive the orders of his subordinate.

“The prize was now within his grasp had he boldly advanced—and the moon shining brightly highly favored such enterprise—but Smith, it would seem, though possessed of considerable professional skill, was not endowed with that intuitive sagacity which swiftly discerns the chances of the moment, and, thus halting on the very threshold of decisive victory, contented himself with partial success, and, having relieved his divisions in the captured works with Hancock’s troops, waited for the morrow.

“Meanwhile, Hoke had arrived on the Confederate side, and Beauregard, having disposed his meagre force upon a new line a short distance in rear of the lost redans, ordered down Bushrod Johnson’s three brigades from the Bermuda Hundred front and made such preparation as was possible for the assault of the morrow.

“The situation was indeed critical, for, though the enemy assaulted but feebly the next morning and Johnson’s brigades arrived at 10 A. M., there was still such disparity of numbers as might well have shaken the resolution of a less determined commander. Burnside’s corps reached the Federal front at noon, and General Meade, having met General Grant on the City Point road, was directed to assume immediate command of the troops and assault as soon as practicable. Thus at 5.30 on the evening of the 16th more than 70,000 troops were launched against the works manned by but 10,000 brave men—a disparity still further increased by the arrival at dusk of Warren’s corps, two brigades of which (Miles’s and Griffin’s) took part in the closing assaults. For three hours the fight raged furiously along the whole line with varying success, nor did the contest subside until after nine o’clock, when it was found that Birney of Hancock’s corps had effected a serious lodgment, from which the Confederates in vain attempted to expel him during the night.

"On the same day Pickett's division, despatched by Lee and leading the advance of Anderson's corps, recaptured the lines on the Bermuda Hundred front which Beauregard had been forced to uncover, and which had been immediately seized by Butler's troops. It is surely sufficient answer to those who represent Lee as even then despondently forecasting the final issue to find him writing next day in great good-humor to Anderson: 'I believe that the men of your corps will carry anything they are put against. We tried very hard to stop Pickett's men from capturing the breastworks of the enemy, but couldn't do it.'

"Fortunately for the weary Confederates, the enemy attempted no offensive movement until nearly noon of the next day, at which hour the Ninth corps, advancing with spirit, carried a redoubt in its front, together with four pieces of artillery and several hundred prisoners, while Hancock's corps pressed back the Confederates over Hare's Hill—the spot afterward known as Fort Steadman, and made famous by Gordon's sudden and daring stroke. Later in the day the Ninth corps attacked again, but was driven back with severe loss.

"Then along the whole front occurred a series of assaults and counter-charges creditable to the courage and enterprise of both sides, yet so confused that an attempted narrative would necessarily share that confusion. Suffice it to say that at dusk the Confederate lines were pierced, and, the troops crowding together in disorder, irreparable disaster seemed imminent, when suddenly in the dim twilight a dark column was descried mounting swiftly from the ravines in rear, and Gracie's gallant Alabamians, springing along the crest with fierce cries, leaped over the works, captured over 1500 prisoners, and drove the enemy pell-mell from the disputed point. Then the combat broke out afresh, for the enemy, with reason, felt that chance alone had foiled them of decisive success, and, despite the darkness, the fight raged with unabated fury until past midnight. . . .

"The battle, as we have seen, did not cease until half-past twelve on the night of the 17th, and the evacuation of the town seemed inevitable, when, by a happy accident, an officer of

Burnside's staff, losing his way in the darkness, rode into the Confederate lines bearing a despatch from Burnside to Meade to the effect that the Ninth corps had been very roughly handled and should be promptly reinforced. This despatch had been referred by Meade to Smith for his information, with the request that he at once reinforce Burnside with such troops as could be spared. Scarcely had Beauregard finished reading the captured missive when a courier galloped up with a message from Hoke, stating that he had easily repulsed Smith's assaults and could lend a helping hand elsewhere. But before this, Beauregard, foreseeing the rupture of his lines, as yet too extended for the strength of his command, now materially weakened by recent casualties, had selected a new and shorter line to the rear, and shortly after the combat ceased the troops were ordered to retire upon this new position—a delicate movement, considering the proximity of the enemy, yet executed rapidly and without confusion, for he had caused the line to be marked with white stakes, and required brigade and division staff officers to acquaint themselves with the positions to be occupied by their respective commands. This was the line held until the close of the defence.

"Grant had ordered Meade to assault along the whole front at daylight of the 18th, but when the Federal skirmishers moved forward at that hour it was found that the line so stoutly defended the evening before had been abandoned by the Confederates. This necessitated fresh dispositions, and Meade, having reconnoitred his front, now determined upon assault in column against certain selected points instead of a general attack in line, as originally intended.

"It was noon before the enemy essayed any vigorous attack, but then began a series of swift and furious assaults, continuing at intervals far into the evening, from Martindale on the right, from Hancock and Burnside in the centre, from Warren on the left; but, though their men advanced with spirit, cheering and at the run, and their officers displayed an astonishing hardihood, several of them rushing up to within thirty yards of the adverse works bearing the colors, yet the huge columns, rent by the plunging fire of the light guns and smitten with a tem-

pest of bullets, recoiled in confusion, and finally fled, leaving their dead and dying on the field along the whole front.

"The men of Anderson's and Hill's corps were now pouring into the Confederate works, division after division, battery after battery, and when night fell those two grim adversaries, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia, again confronted each other in array of battle, while General Grant had learned that Petersburg, as Napoleon said of Valencia, 'could not be taken by the collar.'

"In these four days of assault, from Wednesday to Saturday inclusive, the enemy confessed to a loss of more than 10,000 men—a fact which attests with appalling eloquence the vigor of the defence.

"Sunday morning, June 19th, dawned with soft and dewy brightness, and the Sabbath's stillness remained unbroken, save when at distant intervals a single gun boomed out from the great salients or the rattling fire of the pickets on the river front fretted for a few brief moments the peaceful air. But it was no day of rest to the contending armies, for the Confederates were actively strengthening their crude position, while the enemy plied pick and spade and axe with such silent vigor that, this comparative quiet reigning for two successive days, there arose, as if by touch of a magician's wand, a vast cordon of redoubts of powerful profile connected by heavy infantry parapets, stretching from the Appomattox to the extreme Federal left—a line of prodigious strength and constructed with amazing skill, destined long to remain, to the military student at least, an enduring monument of the ability of the engineers of the Army of the Potomac.

"This done, General Grant was now free to begin that series of attempts against Lee's communications which, despite repeated disaster, he continued with slight intermission to the end.

"On Tuesday, the 21st, the Second and Sixth corps were put in motion to extend the Federal left—the Second to take position west of the Jerusalem plank road, its right connecting with Warren's left, which rested at that point; the Sixth to extend to the left of the Second, and if possible effect a lodgment on

the Weldon Railroad. On the same day Wilson with about 6000 sabres, consisting of his own and Kautz's divisions, was despatched to destroy the Weldon road farther to the south, and thence, by a wide sweep to the west, to cut the Southside and Danville roads. The Second corps, now commanded by Birney—for Hancock's wound, received at Gettysburg, had broken out afresh—succeeded, after some sharp skirmishing with the Confederate cavalry, in taking position to the left of Warren, and the Sixth corps, moving up the same evening, established itself on a line in rear of and parallel to the Second, its left slightly overlapping that corps. But the next morning the Confederate horse showed such a bold front, though 'twas but a scratch force, with cattle like 'walking trestles,' that General Grant determined to suspend the movements to the railroad, and Birney was ordered 'to swing forward the left of the Second corps so as to envelop the right flank of the Confederates.'

"This change of orders led to delay, which Lee, consummate master of that art which teaches that 'offensive movements are the foundation of a good defence,' was swift to improve. Riding to his right, he sent for Mahone, who as civil engineer had surveyed the country and knew every inch of the ground hidden by the tangled chaparral. Few words were wasted. Mahone proposed that he be allowed to take three brigades of Anderson's old division and strike the enemy in flank. Lee assented. Passing his men quickly along a ravine which screened them from the enemy's pickets, Mahone gained a point which he rightly conjectured to be beyond the hostile flank. Here, in an open field fronting the 'Johnson House,' he formed line of battle, the brigades of Saunders and Wright in front, his own brigade, commanded by Colonel Weisiger, supporting the right, while McIntosh of the artillery was directed to move with two guns in the open on the left. Birney, meanwhile, had nearly completed his movement, which was executed without reference to the Sixth corps, and left an ever-widening gap between the two lines, as, 'pivoting on his right division, under Gibbon, he swung forward his left.' Yet Mott's division had come into position on Gibbon's left, and had commenced intrenching, and Barlow was moving up to the left

of Mott, when suddenly and swiftly, with a wild yell which rang out shrill and fierce through the gloomy pines, Mahone's men burst upon the flank. A pealing volley, which roared along the whole front, a stream of wasting fire, under which the Federal left fell as one man, and the bronzed veterans swept forward, shrivelling up Barlow's division as lightning shrivels the dead leaves of autumn; then, cleaving a fiery path diagonally across the enemy's front, spreading dismay and destruction, rolled up Mott's division in its turn, and without check, the woods still reverberating with their fierce clamor, stormed and carried Gibbon's intrenchments and seized his guns.

"When night came down the victors returned to the main lines guarding 1742 prisoners, and bearing as trophies a vast quantity of small-arms, four light guns, and eight standards.

"On the same day Wilson with his cavalry struck the Weldon Railroad at Reams Station, destroyed the track for several miles, and then pushed westward to the Southside road. Here, while tearing up the rails at 'Blacks-and-Whites'—having despatched Kautz, meanwhile, to destroy the junction of the Southside and Danville roads at Burkeville—he was sharply assailed by W. H. F. Lee, who had followed him with his division of cavalry, and who now wrested from him the road upon which the raiders were moving. Again and again did Wilson seek to wrest it back, but Lee could not be dislodged. The combat was renewed next day, lasting from midday till dark, but at daylight of the 24th the Federal cavalry withdrew, leaving their killed and wounded on the field. Wilson reached Meherrin Station on the Danville road the same day, and, Kautz having rejoined him, the two columns pushed on rapidly to Staunton River bridge. But the local militia, intrenched at that point, behaved with great firmness, and W. H. F. Lee, boldly attacking, again drove the Federals before him until dark. Wilson now turned to regain the lines in front of Petersburg, but his officers and men were marauding in a fashion which no prudent officer, on such service as his, should ever have allowed, while W. H. F. Lee hung upon his rear with an exasperating tenacity which brought delay and redoubled his difficulties. At every step, indeed, the peril

thickened, for Hampton, who had crossed the James, now came to W. H. F. Lee's help with a strong body of horse, and, attacking the enemy on Tuesday evening (June 28th) at Sappony Church, drove him until dark, harassed him the livelong night, turned his left in the morning, and sent him helter-skelter before his horsemen.

"Wilson, fairly bewildered, sought to reach Reams Station, which he believed to be still in possession of the Federals—a determination destined to be attended with irreparable disaster to him, for General Lee had despatched thither two brigades of infantry (Finegan's and Saunders's) under Mahone, and two light batteries (Brander's and 'the Purcell') under Pegram, followed by Fitz Lee, who had just roughly handled Gregg at Nance's Shop, and who now came down at a sharp trot to take part in the tumult. Wilson, reaching his objective, descried ominous clouds of dust rising on the roads by which he had hoped to win safety, but offered, in desperation, a seemingly bold front prepared for battle.

"Informed by a negro, whose knowledge of the country notably expanded at sight of a six-shooter, that there was a 'blind road' leading in rear of Wilson's left, Fitz Lee at once pushed forward with his dusky guide, and, having assured himself by personal reconnaissance of the truth of the information, quickly made his dispositions. Lomax's horsemen, dismounted, were formed across the road, with Wickham's mounted brigade in reserve, the latter being instructed to charge so soon as Lomax had shaken the enemy. In a twinkling, as it seemed, the rattling fire of the carbines told that Lomax was hotly engaged, and on the instant the movement in front began, the infantry under Mahone advancing swiftly across the open field, pouring in a biting volley, Pegram firing rapidly for a few moments, then limbering up and going forward at a gallop to come into battery on a line with the infantry, while Fitz Lee, the Federals rapidly giving ground before his dismounted troopers, called up his mounted squadrons and went in with his rough stroke at a thundering pace on the enemy's left and rear."

The result of this sharp attack was a severe defeat to Wilson, who was forced to retire in great haste, his trains being fired

and abandoned, and his artillery and a considerable number of prisoners left in the hands of the Confederate forces. Making all speed, he succeeded in crossing the Nottoway with the pursuing cavalry at his heels, and very well satisfied to escape into the Federal lines with the shattered remnant of his command.

General Grant, having failed in his various attempts to force the Confederate lines, acquiesced in a proposal to supplement the musket and the sabre with the spade and the pick. About the last of June it was proposed to mine and blow up a Confederate salient that was opposite to Burnside's position. At that point the two lines were sufficiently near to warrant such an attempt. The conduct of this mining operation was assigned to the person by whom it had been originally proposed, Lieutenant-colonel Henry Pleasants of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania, a skilful mining engineer. Pleasants found a suitable point to commence operations about five hundred feet distant from the salient to be blown up. His working-parties were drawn from his own regiment, which contained a number of experienced miners. The work was pushed forward so expeditiously that by the 23d of July the mine was completed, and was charged with 8000 pounds of powder. The tamping was completed and the mine was pronounced ready for explosion by the 28th. It was decided that the mine should be sprung early on the morning of the 30th, and to that end the necessary preparations were made.

General Grant, in order to mask his real design, on the 26th sent Hancock and Sheridan with the Second corps and two divisions of cavalry to the north side of the James River, with instructions to threaten Lee's right, and thus to create the impression that a real attack was to be made in that quarter, while he perfected his arrangements for making the assault on Petersburg upon the explosion of the mine. At this time the Confederate force about Petersburg did not exceed 13,000 men, whilst opposed to this Grant had over 65,000. On the 29th were made the final dispositions for attack.

Hancock was directed on the night of the 29th to return from the north of the James with all secrecy and despatch, and

to take part in the assault, while Sheridan was to pass in rear of the army and with his whole cavalry corps operate toward Petersburg from the south and west. On the evening of the 29th, Meade issued his orders of battle. As soon as it was dusk Burnside was to mass his troops in front of the point to be attacked, and form there in columns of assault, taking care to remove the abatis, so that the troops could debouch rapidly, and to have his pioneers equipped for opening passages for the artillery. He was to spring the mine at 3.30 A.M., move rapidly through the breach, and seize the crest of Cemetery Hill, a ridge four hundred yards in rear of the Confederate lines.

Ord was to mass the Eighteenth corps in rear of the Ninth, immediately follow Burnside, and support him on the right. Warren was to reduce the number of men holding his front to the minimum, concentrate heavily on the right of his corps, and support Burnside on the left. Hancock was to mass the Second corps in rear of the trenches at that time held by Ord, and be prepared to support the assault as events might dictate. Engineer officers were detailed to accompany each corps, and the chief engineer was directed to park his pontoon-train at a convenient point, ready to move at a moment's warning.

Meade having assured himself that the Confederates had no second line on Cemetery Hill, as he had formerly supposed and as Duane had positively reported, was now sanguine of success. He made these preparations to meet the contingency of the meagre Confederate force retiring beyond the Appomattox and burning the bridges; in which event he proposed to push immediately across that river to Swift Creek and open up communication with Butler at Bermuda Hundred, before Lee could send any reinforcements from his five divisions north of the James.

The commanders of the white divisions of Burnside's corps decided by lot which division should have the honor of making the assault, the chance favoring Ledlie's division, though, as the sequel shows, it had but little heart for the distinction conferred upon it.

On the morning of the 30th, shortly before the hour appointed for springing the mine, all the columns were in position ready for action. Half-past three arrived, but the silence of the morn-

ing was unbroken; minute after minute went by, while a painful suspense pervaded the expectant columns. Time passed on, yet silence continued to reign. The suspense became almost unbearable. The delay could not be understood, and various conjectures flew rapidly among the troops. At last it was discovered that the fuse had gone out within fifty yards of the mine.

All this time the Confederates lay in peaceful slumber, unconscious of the terrible storm that was about to burst upon them. The fuse was relighted, and at about half-past four the flame reached the powder in the mine.

A tremendous explosion instantly followed, and there was hurled into the air an immense column of smoke and earth, which, after rising to a great height, burst into fragments of timber, stone, broken gun-carriages, muskets, and black and mutilated corpses, which quickly returned in a heavy shower upon the earth. Two hundred men were killed by the explosion, and a rent was torn in the Confederate lines 135 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 30 feet deep.

The whole Confederate line was aroused by the explosion. The men in the immediate vicinity of the mine were for some minutes paralyzed by the shock, while those on the more distant portions of the lines remained a while in a state of ignorance and wonder as to what had occurred.

But the troops stationed near the mine soon became conscious of the catastrophe, and, alive to the importance of immediate action, Lieutenant-colonel John Haskell, who commanded the artillery at that point, turned his guns upon the approaches to the breach, and poured such a destructive fire of canister and shell upon them as to render the advance of the enemy extremely difficult. Some time elapsed before the assaulting column could be got in motion, and when it cleared the breast-work it was met by such a storm of shot and shell that it was thrown into confusion, and the men were so demoralized that they hastily sought shelter. Great numbers rushed into the crater of the mine; others hid themselves behind traverses; some even crouched close beneath the Confederate breastworks, and no efforts of their officers could induce them

to advance. The delay thus occasioned enabled the Confederates to collect a force sufficient to defend the breach.

General Lee, who had been early apprised of the disaster, sent Colonel Venable of his staff to hasten forward troops from other parts of the line. This energetic officer first found General Mahone, whose division was already under arms, and instructed him to proceed to the threatened point. Mahone rapidly advanced, and on reaching the crater promptly formed a cordon of bayonets and took decisive steps to expel the Federal forces that had effected a lodgment upon the Confederate works. Mahone's forces were rapidly reinforced by other troops, and the fighting now became desperate. The Federals, who had for some time been delayed, pushed forward with great resolution and with the determination to counteract the effects of the blunder that had been made in the first assault. But all their efforts were unavailing, and by ten o'clock they were driven back within their own lines.

The mine, instead of opening the gate to victory, had proved a sepulchre. General Grant lost 5000 men in his attempt to pass the breach. Although the distance between the hostile breastworks was barely a hundred yards, only a few of the Federals succeeded in establishing themselves on the Confederate works. The only advantage to the Federals was in the blowing up of 200 Confederates and the killing and wounding of a few hundreds more. The men thus lost by the Confederates could never be replaced, and to this extent General Grant saw himself a step nearer the end.

Generals Lee and Beauregard were eye-witnesses of the gallant defence of the breach and the signal repulse of the enemy. Colonel Weisiger, whose brigade encircled the crater, repelled the enemy with great determination, and his gallantry won for him the grade of brigadier-general. Captain Gerrard, for his gallant conduct, received a similar promotion, while the names of Lieutenant-colonels John Haskell, Pegram, and many others of the artillery obtained prominence in the roll of honor.

Critical remarks in reference to the strategic bearings of this mining operation are perhaps uncalled for. The mine itself

proved useless and became a death-trap to its excavators; yet, if we accept the Federal statements, this was a result of bad management after the explosion, and has no necessary bearing on the question of the military value of the undertaking itself. To mine fortified works which cannot be breached or scaled has long been a common expedient in siege operations, but to attack an earthwork by such a method had never before been attempted, and its ill-success on this occasion will probably prevent its being quickly again essayed.

Federal historians and military authorities ascribe the non-success of the enterprise to an unwise withdrawal, at the last moment, of the black troops, who had been carefully drilled for this special service, and their replacement by a brigade of whites, who were very badly led and held back from charging until the Confederates in the vicinity had recovered from their temporary panic and had hastened to the defence of their imperilled lines. Yet this censure of General Ledlie seems hardly just in view of all the circumstances of the case. The crater into which his division plunged was very difficult to pass—much more so than an ordinary earthwork. And the lack of previous training of his men, or of any full comprehension on his part of the character of the work before him, operated as a serious disadvantage. Had men trained to the work been given the advance in the charge, the result might possibly have been very different. It cannot be denied that the Confederate position was for a short time in serious jeopardy, and that had the Federals taken instant and decided advantage of their opportunity they might have gained an important victory. There has seldom been a case in which the old adage, "Delay is dangerous," more fully applied, yet it was one of those cases in which delay is almost unavoidable, and it becomes a question, therefore, whether there was sufficient probability of success to warrant such a dangerous enterprise.

The ultimate effect of the mining operation was beneficial to the Confederate army. We do not here refer to the heavy Federal loss, but to the feeling of security which naturally followed the failure of the assault, and to the greater degree of

wariness which succeeded. A second enterprise of the same sort would have had much less chance of success than the first. Yet to guard against a repetition of mining operations by the Federals, General Lee adopted a series of precautionary measures consisting of the excavation of extensive underground works so constructed as to check the enemy should they seek to repeat their subterranean scheme of attack.

In the relation of the events of this siege we have been necessarily confined to military details, and, though fully recognizing that the mind of General Lee controlled the movements of the Confederate army and the wonderful series of defensive works which arose as if by magic under his skilful directions, we do not see him directly concerned in them. Some relation of personal incidents connected with his everyday life is important as a counterpoise to the story of his great military achievements, and we cannot better end this chapter than with some anecdotal matter belonging to this period of his life.

Colonel Thomas H. Carter has furnished the author with several interesting reminiscences never before given to the public, yet so indicative of certain traits of General Lee's character as to make them important additions to our work. In Colonel Carter's words, "They are simple anecdotes, treasured by myself because of their personal relation chiefly, though they illustrate a playful vein of character in General Lee of which many persons may not be aware, and one of them brings out his consideration for others—a characteristic that under no circumstances ever failed him."

In the relation of these incidents we shall let Colonel Carter speak for himself, as we cannot hope to improve on his manner of telling his story:

"In 1864, either during July or August, when General Lee's headquarters were near Petersburg, I had charge of the light artillery north of the James River. The line lay near Deep Bottom, and ran eastwardly by Newmarket toward the Chickahominy River, and I was partially but imperfectly intrenched, with skirmishers well advanced and in pits. One day General Lee rode over from Petersburg, and reached us quite early in

the morning, considering the distance he had ridden. My tent was a mile and a half in the rear of the line, in charge of the servants, while I myself slept on the line for fear of an attack by the enemy, then close in front. My cooking utensils were brought up to the line and rations cooked twice daily, and the servant then returned with blankets in the morning to be aired during the day, and with the cooking and eating wares.

"Martin, my servant, a good-tempered, smiling, and most deferential black boy, was quietly walking the gray horse back to camp through the woods after breakfast, pretty well enveloped with blankets, a tray, skillets, tin plates and cans, knives and forks, etc., when General Lee met him. Nothing escaped General Lee's observant eye. Grave, quiet, and taciturn, he saw everything. He pulled up his horse and put Martin through a course of questions, in which he learned his name, to whom he belonged, where he was going, where he had been, and, in short, left not much behind of Martin's limited stock of knowledge.

"All ignorant of this little incident, I advanced to meet the general as he rode up to the line. 'Good-morning, Colonel Carter.'—'Good-morning, general.'—'I expected, colonel, to find the troops in motion.'—'In motion, general? No, sir, there is no movement on foot here—all is quiet,' I said in reply, looking at him with surprise. A merry look in his eye showed me he was joking as he added, 'Well, I met Martin, on the gray, going to the rear with baggage and camp-equipage, and when they go to the rear the troops are usually going to the front.' I explained what he had already heard from Martin, that I slept on the line. 'You are right,' he said, 'to be at your post with your command.'

"Not long after this, while we were stationed at the same place, he rode over from Petersburg, and reached us quite late in the afternoon—too late to return to his headquarters that night. After some conversation about the line and troops he mentioned the necessity of finding quarters for himself and those with him for the night. Apologizing for my inability to make him comfortable and to have him stay with me, for reasons above given, I suggested that he should go to Chaffin's

Bluff, where he would find houses occupied, I thought, by Major Dick Taylor (Walter's brother) and Colonel Jack Maury and others connected with the heavy and stationary artillery. He replied in his quiet, punctuating way of talking, as if weighing each word, 'Well, Colonel Carter, if I turn those gentlemen out of their rooms, where will they sleep?'—'On the ground,' I replied at once, 'like the rest of the army;' and I added, what I knew to be literally true, 'They will be *delighted* to give up their rooms to you.'—'None of your blarney, Colonel Carter—none of your blarney, sir,' he replied with a smile. Though not sure of it, I think he went there, but I am sure if he went the rooms were given up with *delight*.

"When the infantry was hurrying to the support of Fitz Lee's cavalry at Spottsylvania Court-house, as each division arrived it would form into line on the right of its predecessor. I happened to be near General Lee when a few bullets cut the limbs and struck the ground near him. Some general—I forget who—said, 'General, this is no place for you; do go away at once to a safe place.' He replied, with a half-complaining smile and manner, 'I wish I knew where my place is on the battlefield: wherever I go some one tells me it is not the place for me to be.' But he was always deeply touched by these indications of the devotion of his army and people to him."

An incident somewhat analogous to that just related, but indicating a different and very noble phase of General Lee's character, is told by an officer who was present on the occasion. General Lee was visiting a battery on the lines below Richmond, and the soldiers, inspired by their affection for him, gathered near him in a group that attracted the enemy's fire. Turning toward them, he said, in his quiet manner, "Men, you had better go farther to the rear; they are firing up here, and you are exposing yourselves to unnecessary danger."

The men drew back, but General Lee, as if unconscious of danger to himself, walked across the yard, picked up some small object from the ground, and placed it upon the limb of a tree above his head. It was afterward perceived that the object for which he had thus risked his life was *an unfledged*

*sparrow* that had fallen from its nest. It was a marked instance of that love for the lower animals and deep feeling for the helpless which he always displayed.

One story further we may relate of a very delicately administered, yet probably very effectual, reproof. On one of his daily visits to the lines at Petersburg, General Lee asked one of his officers who was riding with him if a work he had ordered to be performed was finished. The officer replied, hesitatingly, that it was. Lee then proposed to ride to the spot and inspect it. On arriving there he found that the work had made very little progress since his last visit to it, a week before. The officer in much confusion sought to excuse himself for his negligence, saying that he had ordered it to be completed at once, and had been told that it was finished, but had not himself been there. General Lee simply remarked, "We must give our personal attention to the lines," and rode quietly on. While doing so he began to compliment his companion on the fine charger he rode.

"Yes, sir," replied the general, "he is a splendid animal, and I prize him the more highly because he belongs to my wife and is her favorite riding-horse."

"A magnificent horse indeed," was General Lee's reply, "but I should not think him safe for Mrs. —— to ride. He is entirely too spirited for a lady, and I would urge you by all means to take some of the mettle out of him before you suffer your wife to ride him again. And, by the way, general, I would suggest to you that *the rough paths along these trenches would be admirable ground over which to tame him.*"

It need scarcely be said the rebuked officer did not trust to the reports of subordinates from that time forward, and that he found a new field for the exercise of his horse.

To these reminiscences we may add the following story, told by General Hampton: On one occasion, when headquarters were at Petersburg, General Hampton happened to be there at meal-time, and was invited to dine with General Lee. It was a period in which rations were very short. A small bowl of soup graced the table, far too limited in quantity to go the rounds of the mess. General Lee accordingly divided it with

his guest, and, as he looked around the table with a merry twinkle in his eye, quietly remarked, "I am credibly informed that the young men of my staff never eat soup."

As a fitting conclusion to this chapter we append the following letter, written by General Lee to one of his daughters during the Petersburg campaign. An interesting feature of it is its indication of his love for buttermilk as a beverage, of which we have already given several instances:

"CAMP, PETERSBURG, July 5, 1864.

"**MY PRECIOUS LIFE:** I received this morning, by your brother, your note, and am very glad to hear your mother is better. I sent out immediately to try and find some lemons, but could only procure two—sent to me by a kind lady, Mrs. Kirkland, in Petersburg. These were gathered from her own trees; there are none to be purchased. I found one in my valise, dried up, which I also send, as it may be of some value. I also put up some early apples, which you can roast for your mother, and one pear. This is all the fruit I can get.

"You must go to market every morning and see if you cannot find some fresh fruit for her. There are no lemons to be had here. Tell her lemonade is not as palatable or digestible as buttermilk. Try and get some for her—with ice it is delicious, and very nutritious. I hope she will continue to improve, and be soon well and leave that heated city. It must be roasting now. Tell her I can only think of her and pray for her recovery. I wish I could be with her to nurse her and care for her. I want to see you all very much, but cannot now see the day when we shall be together once more. I think of you, long for you, pray for you: it is all I can do. Think sometimes of your devoted father,

"R. E. LEE."

## CHAPTER XX.

### *THE SIEGE CONTINUED.*

Grant's Purpose.—Extension of the Lines.—Difficulties of Lee's Position.—Collateral Operations.—Attack on Fort Fisher.—Its Failure.—Subsequent Successful Assault.—Progress of the Siege.—Loss of the Weldon Railroad.—Federal Repulse at Reams Station.—Butler Takes Fort Harrison.—Later Engagements.—General Lee's Appearance.—His Relations to his Soldiers.—Letter to his Daughter.—Extracts from Colonel Taylor's Note-book.—Anecdote.—Lee's Opinion of War Editors.—Lee Appointed Commander-in-Chief.—Peace Conference.—Its Failure.—President Davis's Address.—Lee's Plan of Action.—Overruled by the Authorities.—The Attack on Fort Steadman.—Its Partial Success and Final Failure.—Grant's Advance.—Battle at White Oak Road.—Cavalry Fight.—The Federals Capture Five Forks.—Their Advance on Petersburg.—Checked by Longstreet.—Death of A. P. Hill.

BEFORE proceeding with the description of the siege operations at Petersburg some remarks concerning the general military situation and the purposes of the opposing commanders are desirable.

Though the objective point of Grant's operations was the city of Richmond, his field of immediate action was the city of Petersburg, twenty-two miles south of the Confederate capital. His purpose in this was to seize and hold the Weldon and Southside railroads, the latter of special importance, since it would open the way to the possession of the Danville Railroad, the main line of communication between Richmond and the South. The possession of these roads would force the evacuation of the capital city and the desertion by the Army of Northern Virginia of the formidable line of defensive works on which had been expended such severe and long-continued labor.

With this object in view, Grant steadily extended his lines southward and westward beyond Petersburg, while Lee with unceasing activity faced him at every point with new earth-works covering the all-important arteries of travel which his

powerful antagonist was striving to seize. Eventually, the Confederate line of defence, extending from the Chickahominy to Petersburg, and continued to the Southside Railroad, traversed a distance of thirty-five miles. This extensive line was defended by a force barely exceeding a thousand men to the mile, and often falling below that number, and to maintain it in the face of an enemy outnumbering more than three times the Confederate army unquestionably demanded a remarkable exercise of military genius.

Few men could have borne up against such odds, especially when beset by every difficulty that can embarrass a commander. Lee proved always able to multiply his forces at any threatened point, and was constantly ready to meet attacks, displaying a fertility of resources that surprised both friend and foe. Not once during the campaign had Grant been able to take him unawares, but found him always prepared even for the most covert movements.

After the failure of the mining enterprise direct assaults flagged, and during the remainder of the summer and the autumn the spade took the place of the musket, and both armies employed themselves in constructing new and strengthening old works, Grant gradually extending his left toward the railroads which he desired to capture, and Lee steadily covering these roads by a similar extension of his right.

The monotony of this labor was occasionally relieved by a sortie or lively picket-skirmish, and now and then by a reconnaissance or an outpost affair between the opposing cavalry forces. But these events had no further importance than that of lightening the tedium of the siege. Grant had evidently deferred the doubtful issue of an attack upon his alert opponent, of whose ability in defensive warfare he had already received such disastrous testimony, and he seemed inclined to patiently await the exhaustion of the few remaining resources of his adversary for a final *coup de main*.

We may pause here for a glance at the state of the war in the other regions of the Confederacy. In fact, General Lee was fighting not alone against the army directly confronting him, but against all the military forces of the Northern States

wherever situated. Grant's rank as commander-in-chief of the Federal armies enabled him to wield them all in concert for the great aim which he had in view, the defeat of Lee, and throughout the South armies were manœuvring and marching for a single end, that of cutting at all points the strategic lines of the Confederacy, and so isolating the Army of Northern Virginia as to deprive it of all hope of assistance or reinforcement.

General Lee possessed no such comprehensive authority. He was commander of a single army only, and while his advice in relation to the movements of other armies was constantly asked by the Government, it was not always followed. The command-in-chief was eventually given him, it is true, but too late for it to be more than an empty honor. Had he from the beginning of his contest with Grant possessed authoritative control of all the military resources of the Confederacy, the management of the war would certainly have been more efficient, and the armies of the Gulf States must have been handled with better judgment and success than they were under the orders of the civil authorities. The power of resistance of the Confederacy would probably have been protracted, and it is within the limits of possibility that eventual success in the effort to gain independence might have been attained, though at that late stage of the war this had become almost hopeless.

The collateral operations of the forces under Grant's command were the following: Early's success in the Valley had called a large detachment of the Army of the Potomac to that quarter, whose operations we have already considered. Sheridan in the Valley, Sherman and Thomas in Georgia and Tennessee, and the powerful naval force that was blockading the port of Wilmington, formed a cordon which was gradually crushing out the life of the Confederacy.

As Sherman advanced from Chattanooga, Johnston declined to make a counter-advance into Tennessee, as advised by the authorities at Richmond, but gradually retired before him to Atlanta. He was removed from command at this point, and replaced by Hood, who, after an unsuccessful engagement with

Sherman, adopted the Government plan of an advance into Tennessee, where he was seriously defeated by Thomas. The removal of Johnston at that critical juncture—at the very time when, as he affirms, he was about to attack the enemy—was a serious error that could scarcely fail to be followed by disaster.

Sherman was now relieved from all organized opposition, and advanced leisurely to Savannah, and thence northward through South Carolina, leaving a broad track of desolation behind him.

The blockade of Wilmington was conducted for the purpose of closing the final gateway of intercourse between the Confederacy and the outer world, the port through which munitions of war and supplies for the Confederate armies were chiefly obtained. This port had become of such importance that the greatest efforts were made to maintain it, while the Federal authorities made as strenuous efforts to close it to the daring blockade-runners which had so long evaded the utmost vigilance of the blockading fleet.

Its most important defensive work was Fort Fisher, a powerful and admirably situated earthwork commanding the narrow pass which connects Cape Fear River with the ocean. This was garrisoned by about 1000 men under Colonel Lamb, with, usually, a covering force of several thousand men under General Whiting.

General Grant at an early stage of the siege saw the necessity of taking this fort, and during the summer and fall there was prepared a powerful fleet of transports and gunboats under Admiral Porter. General Butler, who was given the command of the land forces, had conceived the idea of exploding a powder-ship near the fort, with the belief that the shock would so shatter its walls as to render it an easy prey to the fleet.

General Grant had no great faith in this new method of reducing a fortress, but he did not object to its being tried; and the expedition eventually set sail, reaching the neighborhood of Fort Fisher on December 15th.

The powder-ship was exploded several days afterward, just before dawn, but with so little effect upon the fort that the

garrison did not know what had actually happened, but supposed that an explosion had occurred among the blockading ships in the offing. The failure was followed by a fierce bombardment from the fleet, but the land force did not deem it expedient, after a careful reconnaissance, to make an assault, and the expedition withdrew on December 23d, leaving Fort Fisher but little the worse for the enterprise.

Yet the easy repulse of so formidable an expedition had an unfortunate result. It created a false sense of security that subsequently led to an easy capture of the fort, and the consequent fall of Wilmington, the sole remaining port of the Confederate States. In fact, Grant was so far from being discouraged by the failure of the powder-ship enterprise that he ordered the immediate preparation of another and more formidable expedition. This reached the locality of Fort Fisher about the middle of January, 1865. The column of assault, under the command of General Terry, was immediately landed, and while the fort was assailed by a terrific naval bombardment the troops advanced on it with such vigor that the garrison was compelled to yield after a short but gallant resistance. The fall of Fort Fisher closed the port of Wilmington and threw the Confederacy entirely upon its own resources.

While the operations above described were in progress the siege of Petersburg languished. The large detachments which had been withdrawn from Grant's army, first to oppose Early, and subsequently for the expedition against Wilmington, had so reduced his force as to prevent very vigorous operations against Richmond and Petersburg.

In the mean time, Lee, finding himself too weak to hazard a serious blow, did all he could to preserve his army from the constant attrition that was wearing it away. The only means that now remained open to him for replenishing his army was through conscription, yet the few unwilling recruits obtained in this way were of doubtful utility, since many either deserted to the enemy, bearing with them much important information, or spread dissatisfaction among the tried troops.

We may briefly recapitulate the principal military events that occurred from the period of the mine explosion till the

coming of winter. The first of these was an indecisive attack on the Confederate works north of the James. A force under General Hancock was landed at Deep Bottom on the 13th of August. This movement, which comprised two corps of infantry and General Gregg's cavalry division, was made with great secrecy, and was intended to be a surprise. But in this respect it failed, since General Lee penetrated the design of the enemy, reinforced the lines north of the river, and finally succeeded in driving off the assailants, who experienced a loss of 1500 men.

This assault was immediately followed by a movement from the left flank, designed to seize the Weldon Railroad while the Confederate line at that point was weakened in consequence of the reinforcements sent to oppose Hancock. This advance, which was under the leadership of Warren, proved successful in its main object. The Federals met with considerable loss, but they succeeded in taking and holding the railroad. The possession of this road was important to Lee, though not vitally so, and he made a spirited effort to recapture it. An assault was made on Warren's line which turned his left flank and captured 2500 prisoners, among them General Hays. Yet Warren had established himself too firmly to be driven out, and the Weldon road was lost to the Confederate cause.

Grant at once followed up his advantage by sending a powerful force to Reams Station, to which point the road was torn up. This force was attacked on August 25th by A. P. Hill with such vigor that the Federal line was broken and driven back with severe loss. Hancock, who commanded the Federal force, withdrew during the night, leaving behind him, out of a force of 8000 men, 2400 killed, wounded, and missing, 1700 of these being prisoners. The Confederate loss was also severe.

These engagements were followed by a persistent advance of the Federal left, point after point being occupied and the works extended, though at every point the invading columns found themselves faced by strong Confederate earthworks. During these movements there were some sharp encounters, though no action of importance took place.

While these operations on the right were in progress, General Butler crossed to the north of the James on the night of September 8th, and the next morning made a sudden assault on the Confederate earthwork below Chapin's farm known as Fort Harrison, which he captured, with fifteen pieces of artillery. This was the extent of his successes, though he succeeded in holding the fort despite several efforts to dislodge him.

Late in October a turning movement against Petersburg was attempted, a heavy column being thrown across Hatcher's Run on the 27th, which advanced to the vicinity of Burgess's mill on the Boydton road—an avenue which had become of considerable importance to General Lee since the loss of the Weldon Railroad. A severe struggle took place at this point, Lee taking advantage of the opportunity to launch Hill's corps against the isolated force of the enemy, while nearly at the same time Hampton's cavalry division made a vigorous assault upon the Federal left and rear. Hancock was forced back with a loss of 1500 men, his enterprise having proved a complete failure.

This ended the operations on the right of the lines until the opening of the spring campaign, with the exception of a Federal movement begun on the 5th of February with the same purpose as that of the October advance—namely, to turn the Confederate right and seize the Southside Railroad. It met with the same fortune as the preceding operation, the advancing column being assailed in flank and rear by the Confederates and driven back in disorder. The loss in this affair was about 2000 to the Federals and nearly 1000 to the Confederates, who advanced too far and were met by a heavy fire from a Federal intrenchment. At this point fell the brave general John Pegram, one of the most gallant and lamented of the Confederate officers. His loss was the more regretted as he had just before been married, and therefore that he left by his untimely death a widowed bride.

During the period of the autumn and winter campaign General Lee continued in excellent health and bore his many cares with his usual equanimity. He had aged somewhat in ap-

pearance since the beginning of the war, but had rather gained than lost in physical vigor from the severe life he had led. His hair had grown gray, but his face had the ruddy hue of health and his eyes were as clear and bright as ever. His dress was always a plain gray uniform, with cavalry boots reaching nearly to his knees, and a broad-brimmed gray felt hat. He seldom wore a weapon, and his only marks of rank were the stars on his collar. Though always abstemious in diet, he seemed able to bear any amount of fatigue, being capable of remaining in his saddle all day and at his desk half the night.

No commander was ever more careful of his men, and never had care for the comfort of an army given rise to greater devotion. He was constantly calling to the attention of the authorities the wants of his soldiers, and making every effort to provide them with food and clothing. The feeling for him was one of love, not of awe or dread. They could approach him with the assurance that they would be received with kindness and consideration, and that any just complaint would receive proper attention. There was no condescension in his manner, but he was ever simple, kind, and sympathetic, and his men, while having unbounded faith in him as a leader, almost worshipped him as a man. These relations of affection and mutual confidence between the army and its commander had much to do with the undaunted bravery displayed by the men, and bore a due share in the many victories they gained.

Nor was his attention solely given to the cares of camp and field. His warm affection for his wife and children never for a moment ceased, and his letters to them breathe the spirit of the quiet father of a family, not of the great warrior engaged in deadly fray. Seldom has a general busied in the details of a mighty war written home a letter so full of wise fatherly counsel and deep affection as may be found in the one which we append, from General Lee to one of his daughters:

“CAMP, PETERSBURG, 6th November, 1864.

“**MY PRECIOUS LIFE:** This is the first day I have had leisure to answer your letter. I enjoyed it very much at the

time of its reception, and have enjoyed it since. But I have often thought of you in the mean time, and have seen you besides. Indeed, I may say you are never out of my thoughts. I hope you think of me often, and if you could know how earnestly I desire your true happiness, how ardently I pray you may be directed to every good and saved from every evil, you would as sincerely strive for its accomplishment. Now in your youth you must be careful to discipline your thoughts, words, and actions. Habituate yourself to useful employment, regular improvement, and to the benefit of all those around you.

" You have had some opportunity of learning the rudiments of your education—not as good as I should have desired, but I am much cheered by the belief that you availed yourself of it—and I think you are now prepared by diligence and study to learn whatever you desire. Do not allow yourself to forget what you have spent so much time and labor in acquiring, but increase it every day by extended application. I hope you will embrace in your studies all useful acquisitions.

" I was so much pleased to hear that while at 'Bremo' you passed much of your time in reading and music: all accomplishments will enable you to give pleasure, and thus exert a wholesome influence. Never neglect the means of making yourself useful in the world.

" I think you will not have to complain of Rob again for neglecting your schoolmates. He has equipped himself with a new uniform from top to toe, and with a new and handsome horse is cultivating a marvellous beard and preparing for conquest.

" I went down on the lines to the right Friday, beyond Rowanty Creek, and pitched my camp within six miles of Fitzhugh's that night. Rob came up and spent the night with me, and Fitzhugh appeared early in the morning. They rode with me till late that day. I visited the battlefield in that quarter, and General Hampton in describing it said there had not been during the war a more spirited charge than Fitzhugh's division made that day up the Boydton plank road, driving cavalry and infantry before him, in which he was

stopped by night. I did not know before that his horse had been shot under him.

"Give a great deal of love to your dear mother, and kiss your sisters for me. Tell them they must keep well, not talk too much, and go to bed early.

"Ever your devoted father,

"R. E. LEE."

We may add some anecdotes of his life during this period, ere we proceed with the record of historical events. Colonel Taylor, in his *Four Years with General Lee*, gives some interesting extracts from his note-book, from which we select the following characteristic incident:

"PETERSBURG, VA., November 7, 1864.—On leaving the north side the general left it to me to select an abiding-place for our party here. I, of course, selected a place where I thought he would be comfortable, although I firmly believe he concluded that I was thinking more of myself than of him. I took possession of a vacant house, and had his room prepared with a cheerful fire, and everything made as cozy as possible. It was entirely too pleasant for him, for he is never so uncomfortable as when comfortable. A day or two after our arrival he informed me that he desired to visit the cavalry lines, and thought it best to move our camp down. So we packed up bag and baggage, books and records, and moved to a point about eight miles distant, pitched our tents, and concluded that we were fixed for some days at least. The next morning, however, the general concluded that we had better return. So back I came to Petersburg, and, as I could find no better place—nor a *worse* one that was suitable—I returned to the house we had vacated, where we are now comfortably established. This is the first time we have been quartered in a house."

Another note of Colonel Taylor's, dated November 27th, will serve as a companion-piece to the foregoing:

"While General Lee was at Richmond, I concluded to move headquarters, as a party that proposed to occupy the house as soon as we should vacate had given a gentle hint by sending to inquire when General Lee would leave the house. The only

other house available was one two miles from the city, kindly offered by the owner, Mr. Turnbull. So here we are at 'Edge Hill.' I am finely fixed in the parlor with piano, sofas, rocking-chairs, and pictures—capital surroundings for a winter campaign. After locating the general and my associates of the staff, I concluded that I would have to occupy one of the miserable little back rooms, but the gentleman of the house suggested that I should take the parlor. I think that the general was pleased with his room, and on entering mine he remarked, 'Ah, you are finely fixed. Couldn't you find any other room?' —'No,' I replied, 'but *this will do*; I can make myself tolerably comfortable here.' He was struck dumb with amazement at my impudence, and soon vanished."

From Jones's *Personal Reminiscences of General Lee* we extract the following amusing anecdote:

"While at winter quarters at Petersburg a party of officers were one night busily engaged in discussing at the same time a mathematical problem and the contents of a stone jug which was garnished by two tin cups. In the midst of this General Lee came in to make some inquiry. He got the information he wanted, gave a solution of the problem, and went out, the officers expressing to each other the hope that the general had not noticed the jug and cups. The next day one of the officers in the presence of the others was relating to General Lee a very strange dream he had the night before. The general listened with apparent interest to the narrative, and quietly rejoined: 'That is not at all remarkable. When young gentlemen discuss at midnight mathematical problems the unknown quantities of which are a stone jug and two tin cups, they may expect to have strange dreams.' "

His opinion of newspaper generals, those talented editors who have no difficulty in wielding armies and winning victories from editorial rooms, was satirically expressed in a conversation with the Hon. B. H. Hill during this period of the war.

"We made a great mistake, Mr. Hill, in the beginning of our struggle," said General Lee in his quietly humorous manner, "and I fear, in spite of all we can do, it will prove to be a fatal mistake."

"What mistake is that, general?"

"Why, sir, in the beginning we appointed all our worst generals to command the armies, and all our best generals to edit the newspapers. As you know, I have planned some campaigns and quite a number of battles. I have given the work all the care and thought I could, and sometimes, when my plans were completed, as far as I could see they seemed to be perfect. But when I have fought them through I have discovered defects, and occasionally wondered I did not see some of the defects in advance. When it was all over I found by reading a newspaper that these best editor-generals saw all the defects plainly from the start. Unfortunately, they did not communicate their knowledge to me until it was too late."

Pausing for a moment, he resumed, with his beautiful, grave expression:

"I have no ambition but to serve the Confederacy and do all I can to win our independence. I am willing to serve in any capacity to which the authorities may assign me. I have done the best I could in the field, and have not succeeded as I should wish. I am willing to yield my place to these best generals, and I will do my best for the cause in editing a newspaper."

On another occasion he remarked in the same connection, "Even as poor a soldier as I am can generally discover mistakes *after it is all over*. But if I could only induce these wise gentlemen, who see them so clearly *beforehand*, to communicate with me in advance, instead of waiting till the evil has come upon us—to let me know that *they knew all the time*—it would be far better for my reputation and, what is of more consequence, far better for the cause."

During this period two events occurred which are worthy of notice. One of these was the appointment of General Lee, on February 6, 1865, as commander-in-chief of all the Confederate armies. Had this appointment been made two years earlier, it is probable that a different state of affairs would have existed; but at that late date it was merely an empty title, since the Confederate armies had become, with the exception of the Army of Northern Virginia, nearly dissipated, and no opportunity remained for the profitable exercise of his extended power.

The other incident was the arrival in Richmond of Mr. Francis Blair, a distinguished citizen of the United States and a confidential friend of Mr. Lincoln. Although this visit was entirely unofficial in its character, it proved to be the origin of a peace commission which was soon after accredited to meet Mr. Lincoln and his Secretary of State, Mr. Seward, at Fortress Monroe. The interview took place in February, on board a United States vessel then lying in Hampton Roads.

The commission consisted of Mr. A. H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy, and Messrs. Hunter and Campbell, two of the most distinguished Southern statesmen. The meeting was without formality, and assumed more the appearance of a private interview than of a diplomatic conference.

Mr. Blair, on his visit to President Davis, suggested that the Monroe doctrine, a favorite principle in American politics, might be made the means of allaying the existing hostility and bringing about a reunion of the States, especially as the usurpation of the Mexican Government by Maximilian under the patronage of France afforded a sufficient pretext for the enforcement of that doctrine. Six months earlier this plausible solution of the American difficulties might have met with favorable consideration; but now it was too late for the introduction of such a scheme, as the sequel proved. When this point was touched upon by Mr. Stephens, it was coldly received by Mr. Lincoln, whose ultimatum was unconditional surrender. As the powers of the Confederate commission did not involve such an alternative, the conference came to an end.

When the Confederate commissioners returned to Richmond and reported the ill-success of their mission, a sense of disappointment was felt throughout the land. This was succeeded by an indignant determination to carry on the contest to the bitter end. The event called forth from President Davis an address of the greatest eloquence and inspired by the highest spirit of patriotism. This notable oration rekindled the expiring enthusiasm of the Confederates and nerved their arms to renewed efforts in the maintenance of a now almost desperate cause. So great was the feeling raised by his inspiring words that

if General Lee could at that time have taken the field and drawn Grant high up the country among the hills and mountain-spurs, whose friendly aid he knew so well how to apply, the Confederate power might have longer remained unbroken and honorable terms of peace have been obtained.

General Lee had actually taken steps to adopt a plan that offered the only hope of success, but this was overruled. The soundest advice in the land was disregarded, and it was decided that the Confederacy should live or die at Richmond. Lee knew well that there could be but one end to a continuance of the siege, and this opinion he freely expressed to General Long in a conversation held with him the day before the surrender. It had been his wish to withdraw his forces and take up a line behind the Staunton River. In this position he could have greatly harassed and hampered Grant, who would have found it difficult to perform any effective offensive operations with a line of communications one hundred and fifty miles long to defend. Thus situated, he might have prolonged the war almost indefinitely. The mountains in his rear would have given him an opportunity to retreat into Tennessee if necessary, or to move south by way of Danville, with little or no danger of interception. At the same time, he could readily have drawn to his aid all the detachments from West Virginia, North and South Carolina, and the other States, which combined would have given him a very respectable army. When his actual retreat took place his intention was that here indicated, but at that time his depletion in numbers and the advantageous position of his opponents so greatly increased the difficulties of the movement as to render it almost hopeless.

A continued defence of Richmond in accordance with the plan of the civil authorities offered but one chance of success. If Lee could have been rapidly reinforced by 25,000 men, he would have been able to assume the offensive, and might have pushed Grant into the swamps of the Chickahominy, as he had served McClellan on a previous occasion. Yet it was impossible to obtain such a reinforcement. With a force of barely 35,000 men he had from June until March maintained with matchless skill a line of thirty-five miles in extent against a